



# IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **West Nile Virus Reported in Canyon County Mosquitoes**

West Nile virus has been reported in mosquitoes collected from Canyon County. This is the first report of the mosquito borne virus in Idaho in 2005.

“We have been actively looking for West Nile virus in mosquitoes since the beginning of June,” says Dr. Leslie Tengelsen, deputy state epidemiologist for the Department of Health and Welfare. “Since there had been reports of humans, horses, and birds with West Nile infections last fall, we knew that it would only be a matter of time until we detected the virus again this summer. Once the virus enters a state, as it did in Idaho last fall, it tends to stick around.”

The mosquitoes that tested positive for West Nile were located in a popular recreation area near the Nampa fish hatchery. “A lot of people fish in this area, so people should take precautions before they visit,” says Tengelsen. “West Nile virus is transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito. So, it is important for everyone in our state to protect themselves and ‘Fight the Bite’ from mosquitoes that spread West Nile virus.”

People cannot contract the virus from casual contact with an infected animal or person. The virus is spread by migrating infected birds, which are bitten by mosquitoes. The infected mosquitoes can then pass the virus on to people and other animals.

Dr. Tengelsen says that approximately 80 percent of people infected with West Nile virus do not feel sick. Others may experience a mild, flu-like illness. Common symptoms of infection include headaches, body aches and a fever. Sometimes the virus can lead to serious illness requiring hospitalization, especially in people over the age of 50.

People can take the following precautions to protect themselves from mosquito bites:

- Apply insect repellent containing DEET or Picardin to exposed skin and clothing. Follow instructions on the product label, especially for children;
- Insect-proof your home by repairing or replacing screens;
- Reduce standing water on your property that provides mosquito breeding habitat, such as bird baths and decorative ponds;
- Cover up exposed skin when outdoors;
- Avoid mosquitoes when they are most active at dawn and dusk;
- Report dead birds to your local Fish and Game office.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 2,500 people tested positive for West Nile virus in the United States in 2004, resulting in 100 human deaths nationwide. West Nile virus infections, which tend to occur in late summer and fall, are starting to be reported from across the nation in 2005 with 25 cases and 1 death so far this year.

Horses and certain groups of birds, including crows, magpies, ravens, jays and raptors, are often severely affected by West Nile virus. There is not a vaccine available for people and most animals, only for horses. About a third of unvaccinated horses that are infected with West Nile virus die, so horse owners are strongly encouraged to contact their veterinarian for more information on the horse vaccine.

For health information about West Nile virus, please contact your district health department, or visit Health and Welfare's website at: <http://www.westnile.idaho.gov>.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also has useful information about West Nile virus at: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm>.

For information about protecting your horse, contact your local veterinarian, or visit the Idaho State Department of Agriculture website at [www.agri.idaho.gov](http://www.agri.idaho.gov) for testing.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game has helpful West Nile information at: [http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/manage\\_issues/wnv/default.cfm](http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/manage_issues/wnv/default.cfm)

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**(Editors:** For more information, please contact Ross Mason at 208-334-0693.)